

The Ballarat Naturalist

February 2013



Roadside Vegetation Management

Frank Carland, Environmental Co-ordinator with VicRoads addressed the December 2012 meeting giving background to environmental considerations when new roads are constructed. He also covered VicRoads environmental management of roadside reserves and described some specific examples of rehabilitation.

VicRoads manages A, B and C class roads and freeways. There are only two environmental officers in the region that includes Ballarat which includes 12 municipalities where VicRoads is responsible for 4,500 km of roads with roadside reserves amounting to 15 to 20 thousand hectares which is quite a valuable natural asset when it is realised that if this was put in one plot the land would measure about 40km by 40km. .

Issues addressed by environmental officers include fire management, native vegetation removal and need for offsets, aboriginal heritage, erosion, water quality and the carbon footprint of works.

VicRoads aim to reduce environmental impact and Frank explained that VicRoads like other organisations was required to adhere to the many Acts and regulations and could be prosecuted for non compliance as had the Colac Otway Shire and Vic Track in the past. He listed many of the Acts which must be considered including Road Management Act 2004, Transport Integration Act 2010, Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act 1999 which he said had severe penalties for non compliance, Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988, Planning and Environment Act 1987, Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006, Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994, CFA Act 1958 and Environment Protection Act 1970.

An example was given of a fine in the millions for clearing 500Ha adjacent to a RAMSAR wetland, cropping it and not reinstating the area.

Having provided this background of the basis for VicRoads consideration

of the environment Frank then described some interesting specific biodiversity projects.

A Dimboola block was used as an offset. On the block chosen is the pale sun moth which is much rarer than golden sun moth. The life cycle involves most time as larva living underground and eating the roots of wallaby grass and consequently there is a need to maintain this grass which is threatened by pasture grasses and bullock. A strategy of grazing between July and September was used to suppress these.

Construction of the Nhill trailer exchange adjacent to a swamp with growling grass frogs and golden sun moths required these to be taken into consideration when landscaping to provide appropriate habitat.

Other examples of rehabilitation showed the process used. At a grassland site on the Glenelg Highway about 3km west of Wickliffe a plantation was removed to allow regeneration to grassland. After removal there was a lot of wattle regeneration. In May 2009 the area was scraped and it was then sown in September 2009. A video of the seeding was shown. A photo from November 2010 showed a large group of people looking at well developed plants, showing the success of the strategy.

A second site near Christies Road received similar treatment. In Autumn 2006 the area was burnt and in Spring 2008 trees were gone and there was some regeneration including fog grass. Again the scraping strategy was used and by December 2012 the area looked good with a variety of plants. The intention was to burn the area this season.

With each area being about 1,500 square metres and costs being about \$28,000 including \$12,000 for the earth works which involved three trucks, a grader and loader which all carried out the work carefully to minimise other damage, the work was not cheap but was very effective.

It was certainly interesting to hear of these projects and to be provided with background to considerations taken by VicRoads in construction and maintenance of the road system.

Thank you to Frank for taking the time to put together and give the presentation and for the work he is doing in preserving the environment.

Peter Dalman

fungimap 7

May 24-27 at Rawson

Contact: ww.rbg.vic.gov or Les Hanrahan

Christmas gathering – Thursday 13th December 2013

At Bill Murphy's invitation a Christmas gathering was held in the function centre of his home at Rosebank Village. Bill welcomed members and had the tables nicely set up with the plates and cutlery required and the outside BBQ ready. The facilities were very suitable with 2 electric BBQs under cover and the alternative of inside or outside seating.



Photo: Christmas gathering

With it raining for at least part of the time it was good to have the inside dining area. As usual shared salads and deserts complemented barbeque food.



A highlight was the opportunity to see the collapsed mine-shaft immediately behind Bill's home into which a rose and other garden plants and soil had disappeared and to wonder at what could have been if the collapse had been closer to the house or if someone had been gardening at the time of the collapse. Thank you to Bill for the invitation.

Photo: Bill and others admiring the subterranean area.

Rokewood/Corindhap excursion – 9th December 2012

Our last excursion for the year began in the afternoon, included a picnic tea and finished with a walk around the Rokewood reservoir admiring the birds and mature trees.

We began at the Corindhap Gravel Reserve with a leisurely wander amongst grassland burnt fairly recently. At this early summer time, most

spring flowers were finished, some with odd blooms still to be found. One plant which captured our attention was pretty Blue Grass-lily (*Caesia vittata*), amongst a few Chocolate lilies (*Arthropodium strictum*), Common Everlasting (*Chrysocephalum apiculatum*), Trailing Goodenia (*Goodenia lanata*), Bluebell (*Wahlenbergia spp*), Pink Bindweed (*Convolvulus erubescens*), Common Rice flower (*Pimelea humilis*), small St John's Wort (*Hypericum gramineum*), Running Postman (*Kennedia prostrata*) and Cranberry Heath (*Astroloma humifusum*). Particularly noticeable were the seed cases of numerous milkmaids (*Burchardia umbellata*). These must have had a good season.

We moved for a look at Corindhap Biodiversity Reserve (formerly Corindhap reservoir). This crown land reserve is managed by the Ballarat Environment Network (BEN) and the Corindhap Neighbourhood Group (Woody Yallock Catchment group). The reserve contains the endangered grassy woodland EVC (Ecological Vegetation Class). Drooping She-oak Grassy Woodland remnants were once more widespread. We noted restless flycatcher, crimson rosellas, cormorants, blue-faced cuckoo shrike and freshwater mussel shells.



Photo: Rokewood Cemetery grassland

Afternoon tea in Corindhap followed before we drove to the Rokewood Cemetery – always a favourite grassland area – an ever diminishing plant community. Rokewood was once surrounded by vast grassy volcanic plains in most directions or grassy woodlands on the Ordovician country to the north. Since settlement the dramatic loss of this vegeta-

tion has meant that native grasslands are one of the most threatened ecosystems in Australia. Regular burning is very beneficial to maintaining or improving the quality of these grasslands and this area is significant, well-managed and special. There is an excellent pictorial signboard explaining this and alerting visitors to appreciate the chance to see rare plants including Button Wrinklewort (*Rutidosia leptorhynchoides*) and Hoary Sunrays (*Leucochrysum albicans ssp albicans var. tricolor*). We found Blue Devils (*Eryngium*

May Excursion to Cranbourne Botanical Gardens

On Sun May 5 a bus is booked to take us and Landcare and APS visitors so bookings will be required. Details in later newsletters.

ovinum), Curved rice-flower (*Pimelea curviflora*), Feather heads (*Ptilotus macrocephalus*), Yellow Rush-lily (*Tricoryne elatior*), Black-anther Flax-lily (*Dianella admixta*), Lemon beauty heads (*Calocephalus citreus*), Clustered Everlasting (*Chrysocephalum semipapposum*), Common Everlasting (*Chrysocephalum apiculatum*), Nodding saltbush (*Einadia nutans*), Kangaroo grass (*Themedia triandra*), Wallaby Grass (*Austrodanthonia sp.*), Spear Grass (*Austrostipa sp.*), and a number of other grasses we would prefer not to see. Drooping She-oaks (*Allocasuarina verticillata*) line the fence, just inside of which is an interesting collection of recently erected plaques honouring pioneers, placed there by descendants and telling something of the stories of early settlers.

We moved then to the Rokewood reservoir reserve. A sign explains that this patch of remnant native plains grassland is typical of what was once widespread across volcanic plains but is now less than 1% . Here we enjoyed a social meal in the sun before chang-



ing our focus to birds. Bush birds included wattle birds, welcome swallows, black-faced cuckoo shrike, blue wrens, mudlarks, willy wagtails and white plumed honeyeater. We then walked to the water's edge and observed grey teal, Australasian grebe, great cormorants, coots and magpies. We walked around the reservoir, noting the construction of dam banks and enjoying mature trees, especially some red gums growing unrestricted but providing obvious swimming and diving platforms. A fisherman was expecting to catch eels. In the early evening we exchanged Christmas greetings and departed. Thank you to John for assisting with the plant list and names.

Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat

Incorporated A0014919P ABN 13 150 403 135

Club Meeting Minutes

December 7th 2012

Opening and Apologies: Peter welcomed 24 members and friends.

Apologies: Sue McLachlan, Chris & Anna Baulch, Dulcie Brooke, Nina Netherway, Zelda Martin.

Moved Fran Hanrahan Seconded Ken Hammond. Carried.

Minutes of previous meeting: Moved Claire Dalman Seconded Jacki Metcalf. Carried.

Business Arising from Previous Meeting: nil

Correspondence. IN

- Bendigo FNC: Whirrakee November 2012
- Field Nats News, Dec 2012;
- Geelong Naturalist Nov 2012
- Bendigo Bank: current statement
- Apology from Edna Fry via Liz Cocks re 60th anniversary
- Apology from McDonnells re 60th anniversary.
- Thanks for photo from Liz Cocks on behalf of Edna Fry.
- Sandhurst Trustees statement
- FNCV Junior Naturalist
- Peter Marriott's Moths of Victoria Book 4 is available – order form.

OUT: Group photo given to Edna Fry.

That the correspondence be accepted: *Moved: Elspeth Swan Seconded: Peter Billing. Carried.*

5. Business Arising from Correspondence: nil

6. Reports

Treasurer's Report: Opening balance \$5847.89 Income\$135.10 Ex-penses\$273.74Closing balance: \$5709.25 *Moved Les Hanrahan Seconded John Mildren. Carried.*

60th Birthday Anniversary: 34 attendees including 5 grandchildren of members. Carol thanked Claire & Peter Dalman for organising the function, and Val Hocking for ordering a celebratory cake.

New Incorporation legislation – info session held at Creswick Nov 20th attended by Carol Hall & Elspeth Swan; committee will be looking to see what changes we need to make.

ANN: JG had been to a meeting at Geelong re the future organisation of ANN, a

debate carried on from discussions at Canberra in October. An interim steering committee is to meet at FNCV rooms in April.

General Business

Feb 3 excursion to Werribee – expressions of interest invited as numbers have to be planned re cars and informing Melbourne Water. Leave 8am; 4 cars proposed with permit holders Carol Hall, Helen O'Donnell, John Gregurke and Ken Hammond. JG to organise.

Xmas breakup: Bill Murphy offered to host a Christmas gathering at his place Rosebank Retirement Village, Thursday 13th December at 5.30pm for 6pm; access off Charlotte St.

JG had received notice of a meeting of a newly formed Friends of Canadian Corridor who wish to have input to the planning of old plantation land at Mt Helen/Mt Clear. He indicated he'd go on Dec 9th.

Elsbeth handed round a sheet for members to suggest syllabus ideas.

Show & Tell/Field Reports

- Carol Hall had photos of the 60th anniversary gathering; Wayne McGuire had bird photos from Lake Burrumbeet; John & Elaine Gregurke had photos of early club activities - when their children were young.
- Mid November: Claire Dalman noted that most birds had departed Miners Rest Swamp including the Brolgas.
- Mid November: At Lake Wendouree Val Hocking saw a pair of Wood Duck with 18 chicks but 2 different ages.
- 21 November: At Lake Burrumbeet John Gregurke found that the Brolga pair had hatched one chick, but couldn't be found a week later; at Miners Rest Swamp the Brolgas had abandoned the nest before hatching.
- Late November: Peter Billing saw Straw-necked Ibis at Lake Wendouree.
- 2 Dec A count of birds on Lake Wendouree by John Gregurke et al. = 2400 Coots, 150 Swans including 55 cygnets.
- 2 Dec: John Mildren saw 20 Black-tailed Native Hens at Lake Wendouree. On 30 Nov skein of Straw-necked Ibis; and both the Ibis and a flock of 11 Pelicans riding updrafts over the Lake.
- 5 Dec: Carol Hall saw a dozen Pelicans swimming on nth side of the Lake
- 19 Nov: Wayne McGuire saw 18 Freckled Ducks on Lake Burrumbeet.

Excursion arrangements

Leave 1.30pm for Corindhap-Rokewood area. Bring tea.

Syllabus item: Frank Carland: *Roadside Vegetation Management*. Frank was thanked by Peter Dalman.

Supper.

CALENDAR 2013

February

- Fri 1 *Vikings, Volcanoes & ice – the making of Iceland* -Carol Hall ,
Geographer/Club member
- Sun 3 *Western Treatment Plant: bird watching , near Werribee -*
Permit holders & members
- Tues 19 Committee Meeting at Carol's

March

- Fri 1 AGM and Members' Images - *Patterns in Nature*
- Sun 3 *Pyrenees Forest & E. pyrenea - J. Higgins & Thurgoods*

Committee

President..... Peter Dalman
Vice –President Fran Hanrahan
Secretary..... Carol Hall
Treasurer Les Hanrahan

Claire Dalman.....	Val Hocking
John Gregurke.....	John Mildren
Elspeth Swan	

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 Fran Hanrahan

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Meetings are held at the Primary Industries Training Centre, cnr Gillies and Gregory Sts, on the first Friday of the month at 7.30pm..

Excursions: Leave from the carpark at the Primary Industries Training Centre, cnr Gillies and Gregory Sts. at 9.30 am, unless otherwise advised.

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